

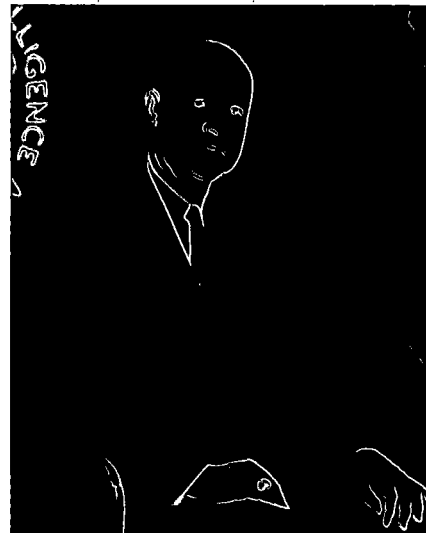
## **An Interview With Former CIA Executive Director Lawrence K. “Red” White**

**James Hanrahan**

*Editor's Note: “Red” White grew up poor in Tennessee. He was saved from a life of drudgery by a somewhat fortuitous appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. In the Army, he learned to accept responsibility, exercise authority, and, above all, lead men. He fought in the Pacific theater in World War II, earning a Distinguished Service Cross, a Silver Star, two Legions of Merit, and three Bronze Stars. Colonel White was severely wounded in the Philippines in 1945 and had to leave the Army after spending nearly two years in various military hospitals.*

*He joined the newly created CIA in 1947, becoming in short order the chief of the Foreign Broadcast Information Branch—later renamed FBIS—in the Office of Operations, which handled all overt collection functions. White’s success in transforming an unruly and troublesome organization caught the eye of his superiors, and he was promoted to Deputy Assistant Director of the Office of Operations in December 1950. He remained in that post until 1952, when he was named Assistant to the Deputy Director for Administration. White carried much of the DDA’s load in that job, and DCI Allen Dulles formally recognized that fact in 1954 when he appointed Red to be the Deputy Director for Administration. In 1965, DCI Raborn appointed him Executive Director-Comptroller, the position in which he remained until his retirement in 1972.*

*Red White knew the Agency’s great early leaders—“Beetle” Smith, Allen Dulles,*



*Frank Wisner, Richard Bissell, Richard Helms—as few others did. He paints a fascinating portrait of the Agency as it once was.*

*The following excerpts are from James Hanrahan’s interview of Colonel White at his home in Vero Beach, Florida, on 7 January 1998.*

### **Appointed to West Point**

I grew up in a small town of about 500 in west Tennessee. My father was a Presbyterian minister, which means we didn’t have any money. I was born in 1912. From the time I was 12 years old, I worked on the farm from sunup to sundown for maybe \$1.50 a day. When I was about 16, I had a job digging ditches to put the waterworks in our hometown, for which I got 25 cents an hour, and we

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worked a 10-hour day. I was maybe 13 or 14 when I knew that I didn't want to be a minister, because you didn't get paid anything, or a farmer, because you had to work too hard. I knew that I wanted to go to college, but I had no money to go. I graduated from Troy High School with a class of 22 in 1929.

Shortly before graduation, almost by accident, I picked up a book on how to gain admission to West Point. The very first sentence I read said, "Cadets at the United States Military Academy received a salary of \$1,080 per year." That sounded like quite a bit of money to me, so I read the pamphlet and learned that a Congressman could appoint you to West Point. There was another minister in town who had been my scoutmaster, and he had been in World War I with a newly elected Congressman whose name was Jerry Cooper. I appealed to my ex-scoutmaster if he would speak to Mr. Cooper about a possible appointment. Mr. Cooper wrote me a note and said that he was sorry, he couldn't give me a principal appointment until 1932, but he did have a first alternate appointment if I would like it. So I told him, "Of course I would." I graduated from high school the end of May, and about the middle of June I got a note from West Point saying it was too late to take any sort of an examination, which I normally would have had to do, but I should send in my high school record.

None of the four teachers who taught in my high school were around, and I finally found the principal of the school over in a town called Dupton, Kentucky, about 70 miles from where I lived, and I asked him to fill out this form. He said, "I'm sorry, I can't do that because you have 12 high school credits, you tell me, and I only taught two of those subjects." I don't know exactly what I said,

but the gist of it was, "Well, probably nothing is ever going to come of this anyway, but isn't it just too bad that I don't even have a chance because I can't get anybody to fill out this form?" Mr. Murray said, "I'll tell you what, we'll just estimate." So we sat down in the back of this general merchandise store, and he'd ask me what I made in each subject. Without exception I'd answer "A." Once in a while he'd say, "Maybe we better make that a B+."

When we had finished, he should have called up the class valedictorian and told her that she had been replaced, because I had a pretty fancy high school record there that day. I still didn't anticipate anything would come of this, but on the 28<sup>th</sup> or 29<sup>th</sup> of June I was working for a farmer bailing hay, and the farmer's wife called to me and said I was wanted on the phone. It was a telegram from West Point saying that the principal appointee, who had been so fortunate as to take those examinations, had flunked them and that my certificate was approved unconditionally. Report to West Point before noon on 1 July [1929] pending physical examination.

The physical part at West Point, which was rugged, was no problem for me. I had been a good high school athlete, and I had worked on a farm, and I could take all that, but when the academic work started, I was in deep trouble. I remember when they put out the first rankings, there were 420 of us, and I was about 415.

By the end of the second year, I was able to make my grades without any assistance. I graduated 287 out of a class of 347, or something like that. I was commissioned on 13 June [1933]. In those days, the Army was poor, and we graduated into a 15-percent pay cut,

which meant instead of \$125 a month, we got \$115, but we did get quarters and I think \$18 for rations or something.

## **Off to War**

In September [1942], my regiment was ordered to the Pacific. We sailed from San Francisco in early September. We first went to the Fiji Islands, and went down to the New Hebrides Islands, and saw no combat there. By this time, I had become the executive officer of the regiment, a lieutenant colonel and all that. One day, while we were down in the New Hebrides, I got orders to report to Guadalcanal to division headquarters. This was the 37<sup>th</sup> Division, a National Guard division commanded by Bob Beightler. The fighting on Guadalcanal was almost over by that time. I was assigned as the Assistant G3.

The first real combat I saw was in New Georgia, and it was pretty rough. The general, he'd send me to every hotspot there was. He'd say, "You go up there now and order them to do whatever you think they ought to do, but don't get into too much trouble." I had a number of close calls in New Georgia, and finally we captured Munda Airport, our main objective. The next day, he said to me, "We want to get into the island of Vella LaVella and seize it before the Japs get there. We can't go right now, but they're going to send a combat team from the 25<sup>th</sup> Division up there, and you go along as an observer and be ready to receive our units when they come in."

I reported to General McClure, and I said, "General, I'm told to go along on this trip with you as an observer." He took one look at me, and he said, "You will be the chief of staff." I said, "I was told to just be an observer." He said,

"Yes, I know. Here are three others that are supposed to be observers, and I'll throw in my aide. You can do anything you want to with them, but you are the chief of staff." So we fly back down to Guadalcanal to take command of the task force. The first thing he told me was to write the order. Goodness, I had never written an order.

We had 10,000 people in the Army, Navy, Marines, Seabees. I wrote about the shortest order anybody had ever read. I showed it to him, and he said, "It's pretty brief, but I never like to tell people how to do things, just to tell them what to do." So he said, "This is okay."

## Landing on Bougainville

*After successfully serving on Vella LaVella as General McClure's Chief of Staff in Task Force C.G., White returned to his own unit on Guadalcanal.*

I went back down to Guadalcanal and got ahold of the division. General Beightler gave me a regiment, the 148<sup>th</sup> Regiment. Two weeks later, I found myself taking my regiment plus one-third of the division's special troops. I took about 5,000 troops into Bougainville, and we got up there, and the commodore said to me, "What beaches do you want to land on?" They had promised to get me word, but they never did. He said, "I'll put you on any beach you want to get on, but you've got to get off my ship."

The Marines had already landed, and they were sending out people to direct small boat traffic. Some coxswains took orders from the Marines, others had already received orders from their

skippers, and we landed in the worst mess you have ever seen. I thought, "My gosh, I'm going to get canned. My command didn't last very long." So I finally found a Marine general. I said, "Sir, I'm in command of these troops that are landing." He said, "How old are you?" I said, "Thirty-one." He didn't think that I should be in command of the troops. He asked, "How are things going?" And I said, "General, if someone had made a deliberate plan to screw up the landing, they couldn't have done a better job." And I told him what had happened.

He treated me like a long-lost son and said, "When you get them together, you let me know when you are ready to go in." About noontime, I called him and told him I was ready. After 24 or 48 hours we had done very well. We had run into pretty light resistance, and we had pushed out a couple of thousand yards. He was worried about me, and he sent his assistant division commander over there, and his assistant division commander couldn't believe what we had done. He apparently reported to the general that he didn't really need to worry about his left flank. As a result, I got a nice commendation from Admiral Halsey and whatnot. We were on Bougainville a whole year.

## The Philippines

*White next led his men in the invasion of the Philippine Islands, landing in Lingayen Gulf on the island of Luzon in January 1945.*

I kept pushing, and I think it's fair to say that my regiment led the parade for about three weeks, all the way into Manila. On the outskirts of Manila there was a brewery full of beer. Some soldier got in there, and the spigot didn't

run fast enough, so he broke that off, and every soldier that went by there would take a helmet full of beer. General Kruger, the 6<sup>th</sup> Army commander, came down there, and said, "White, what's this?" I told him, "We just captured this brewery, and they've all got a helmet full of beer."

We had a pretty good fight going not far up the road. He said, "What do you think about a soldier drinking a whole helmet full of beer and going right into a firefight?" I said, "General, I don't know, but I don't think I'd like to try and stop it." He said, "I don't think I would either."

So we fought our way down to the Pasig River, which runs right through the middle of town and right in front of Malacanang Palace, which is the presidential palace. I was standing on the grounds near the palace, and this voice behind me says, "White, what are you doing down here?" I turned around, and it was General MacArthur.

I had bumped into him a few times and actually worked for him for a couple of weeks when he was a military adviser to the Philippine president, before he was recalled to active duty to take command. I told him that I was going to take over from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, and then I said, and I don't know to this day why I said it, but I said, "I don't see why I don't cross the river right here." He said, "Do you think you can?" I said, "General, you and I are standing here on a bank of the river, and nobody is shooting at us. If I had a boat, I'd sure give it a try." So he said, "What are you going to do now?" I said, "I think I'll call our division commander and tell him just what I told you." In a matter of seconds, it seemed, my telephones and radios were ringing. "What do you

want? You can have anything you want. Where do you want it? When do you want it?" I said, "All I want is some boats."

## Wounded in Action

*After successfully crossing the river, White's regiment was ordered to attack in the direction of the town of Baguio.*

We were attacking up the Baguio road. Baguio is at about 5,000 feet, and this road is just a hairpin road all the way up there. I had five tanks, and the Japs were trying to force us off the road. I knew I had the firepower to blast through these roadblocks, and that's what I was doing. On 17 April, my lead battalion ran into heavy resistance. I went forward, as I usually did, to see what I could do, and they were held up by a pretty hefty roadblock about six or seven miles from Baguio. My lead tank had backed up to get a better shot, and he backed over a cliff, a couple of hundred feet. Everything was held up trying to get the casualties out of there. Everything was quiet at the moment, and the next hairpin turn was as far as from here to the front door, so I foolishly went up there to peek around, and I got about halfway there, and around that turn came two Japanese tanks with all guns blazing, and about 10 infantry riding on top of the tanks. They stopped momentarily, and all the infantrymen jumped off, and then this lead tank rammed my tank, and all hell broke loose.

I was hit rather quickly, and I dropped my pistol and fell. My leg was broken up here, it was broken down there. I rolled across the road and lodged against a little pine tree about 10 or 15 feet below the road. I would have died

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in a matter of minutes, except that the Catholic chaplain, who had been up there to give the last rites to the casualties in the tank that had rolled over the cliff, saw me. He put a tourniquet on this leg, gave me a morphine syringe, and stayed there with me until all the Japs were killed, I guess, and then he got somebody to help get me off of the battlefield, and, except for spending almost two years [23 months] in the hospital, that was the end of my military career.

I had a good military career. I had a lot of responsibility as a young guy. I owe everything to West Point. I want to be buried there. I had one chance in a million that I would ever get any kind of an education, and I went to West Point just to get an education. I came out of West Point waving the flag about as high as anybody who ever graduated from there. It stuck with me.

## Into the Agency and FBIS

There were quite a few military people over in that Central Intelligence Group. It was then, through a good friend and classmate of mine, that I got an appointment with General [Edwin] Wright, who was [DCI] General [Hoyt] Vandenberg's deputy. He wanted me to talk to Bill Quinn [chief of the Strategic Services Unit], who was a classmate of mine at West Point. I talked to Bill, and then he wanted me to talk to General [Edwin] Sibert, who was running OO

[Office of Operations, which handled overt collection]. Christmastime I was going out to St. Louis, and I went over to see General Sibert. He said, "I'd like to have you, but I can't tell you anything until I get General Vandenberg's permission." I went on out to St. Louis, and on Monday morning he called me, and he said he'd talked to General Vandenberg. They'd like very much to have me, and I said, "What am I going to do?" He said, "I can't tell you that over the phone." Then I said, "How much are you going to pay me?" He said, "We are going to give you a grade 14." I said, "How many dollars is that?" He didn't know. He inquired around, and as I remember, it was about \$8,000 in those days. So I said, "Fine, I'll come to work." When I got back, he wanted me to come to work right away.

I entered on duty on 9 January 1947, and the chief of FBIS was a youngster about my age named Russell Shepherd. He was a bright fellow, and he and I got along fine. It was obvious from the beginning they needed leadership, discipline, and organization. Russ Shepherd really wasn't the guy to do it. It was his idea, so far as I know, to enter into a reciprocal arrangement with the BBC. He spent most of his time working on that, and I took over the day-to-day operations. Then in September, he was notified by the Agency that he really was no longer acceptable, and I never knew why, and nobody ever told me why. So I became the chief on 29 September 1947.

## Taking Charge

Security problems, leadership problems. In the first place, we were down on "K" Street and had no guard on our building. Anybody could walk into our offices. I'd go out for lunch, and when I

came back there was no telling who I'd find there waiting to see me. None of the people had a security clearance. They gave me a badge, and I could go in and out of CIA offices, but nobody else could.

I hired Allen Warfield, Roger Sealy, and Joe Couch, all of whom had been in the service. I think I hired each one of them at grade 11. Other than that, I brought everybody in at grade 5. I'd get these youngsters out of college, and I'd say the same thing to them: "If you want to join up with me, I'll take you, but you are going to do what I ask you to do. You may want to go to London, but I may want to send you to Timbuktu. If that's what I ask you to do, you're going to do it. If you don't want to enter into that kind of arrangement, don't come here."

One of the senior editors in the wire-room had written a best seller and had a Ph.D. in journalism. I walked in the wireroom one morning and picked up a piece of copy, and I asked him if he had sent this to the Voice of America. He said, "No." I said, "Well, it looks pretty good to me. I think you ought to send it to the Voice of America." He said, "If you want me to send that to the Voice of America, you give me an order in writing." I said, "Did you wear a hat to work this morning?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Get it. You're fired as of now." He wrote a beautiful letter to General Vandenberg within the next 24 hours, citing all his credentials and so forth and so on, so I found myself on the carpet in front of General Vandenberg. I told him what happened, and I said, nicely, I hope, "General, you know you hired me to clean this place up, and if you don't support me in this case maybe you better get somebody else." He said, "Oh no,

I'm going to support you, but next time be a little more careful."

They got the message that there was someone with authority around here. Then they had a fellow named Phil, who was a very bright fellow. He had a Ph.D. in ancient Greek, I think, but he could write very well. He had a title; he was chief of the Field Division. In other words, he ran all the field stations. I said, "You're the chief of the Field Division, but you are a staff officer. You don't command anything. I command." It was hard for him, but he accepted it, and he was a great help to me.

Wally Klima was my engineer. He hired a good engineer to go out to Cyprus and be our chief engineer out there. One weekend, Phil, who lived out in Gaithersburg, had a Sunday afternoon party. I went out there, and on Monday I'm having lunch at the State Department cafeteria with Klima and with this engineer. I said, "You know, I felt a little guilty driving all the way out there in my car and not taking anybody." I looked at this engineer, and I said, "How did you get out there?" He said, "Oh, I'm in good shape."

So I got to thinking about that, and he was staying out at Hedgeneck, where we had several cars. Without talking to anybody, I called him in about an hour later and I said, "I think you took a car from Hedgeneck, and you not only drove it Sunday afternoon out to Phil's party, but you drove it all around town over the weekend for your personal pleasure and use. Is that true?" He said, "Yes, it is." I said, "You are fired as of this moment." He couldn't believe it. He said, "May I sit here a minute or two?" I said, "You can sit here for as long as you want."

Well, Klima and everybody just begged me not to do this. I said, "No. If I can't trust him from here to Hedgeneck, I'm not about to trust him from here to Cyprus." I liked this guy. He later got a job with Voice of America, and they called me, and I said, "I think this fellow's a good engineer, but he made a mistake, and I've got enough problems over here, and I fired him, but I think he'll do a good job for you." He called me and said, "I just want to thank you. You did absolutely the right thing. I just want to tell you how much I appreciate it; you've changed my life, I'll never make that mistake again."

But those are the kind of things we had to do, and it didn't take too long for the morale of the people to go up. I felt pretty good. They were proud of being in FBIS, and I really enjoyed it. You had a monopoly on the business. Everybody liked your product, they just had to have more. I could travel anywhere I wanted to [for] as long as I wanted to.

Ellis Porter ran what we call the Editorial Division of FBIS. He put out the daily publications, and he was a good man, but he was getting old, and he had a heart problem, and he was coming up for retirement. I wanted to bring my chief in London home for a month, then I wanted to bring my chief from Cyprus home for a month, and I wanted to send Porter to London for that month and then down to Cyprus for that month, and then he was going to come home and retire. Dr. Tietjen [Director, Office of Medical Services] wouldn't approve it. He said, "Absolutely not." I tried to talk Tietjen into it. I explained to him what I was trying to do, and he said, "No, you can't do it."

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I appealed to Admiral Hillenkoetter, who was the Director. I told Hillenkoetter that I hated to ask him, but I wanted him to overrule Dr. Tietjen. I said, "After all, he knows he's got a heart problem, and I'm going to put him on a ship. He and his wife, they're going to go to London, they're going to spend a month in London. They're going to get on another ship and go to Cyprus, they're going to spend a month in Cyprus, and they're going to get on another ship and come home. I really would like to do this because I need somebody to be there, and this man is entitled to something, he's done a great job for us." Hillenkoetter said, "Of course he can go. What greater honor could he have than to be buried at sea?"

**Assistant DDA, "Beetle" Smith,  
and Allen Dulles**

When "Beetle" Smith came, he really shook that place up. Believe me, they all showed up. He really rocked not only CIA, but also the Community.

There weren't any Deputy Directors in those days. He set that up with the Deputy for the Clandestine Services and the Deputy for Intelligence and an Administrative Deputy. I think that was a good thing to do, and I think he came up with a sensible organization, and he certainly brought the Agency way up in the Community, where people were made to recognize that you were dealing with the President's intelligence officer. And probably not many people could have done it at that time. Then Allen Dulles came along, and he reaped the benefit of all this.

I guess it was in early December of 1951 that I was on a trip. George [Carey, Director, Office of Operations] called

me and told me that General Smith wanted me to become assistant to [Deputy Director for Administration] Walter Wolf and run the administrative business for the Agency.

*White hesitated to accept the post because the Clandestine Services were against centralizing administration for the whole Agency in the DA.*

I knew that this was a big fight and [Deputy Director for Plans Frank] Wisner, and [Deputy Director of Central Intelligence] Allen Dulles, and all those great people were very much against this. So I said, "Why don't you just tell General Smith that I don't really want to do this." He [George Carey] said, "You'll be home on Monday, you could tell him." So Monday I go in to see General Smith, really pretty sure I was going to say, "I don't really want to do this." He said to me, "How many DSCs have you got?" I said, "One." "Oh, my God," he said, "I thought you had a whole chestful!" Then he said, "I'll tell you what you are going to do." He never asked me whether I wanted to or not, and he was quite clear that this is what I was going to do. I said, "Yes, sir."

A few days later, he called a meeting of all the senior people, and I was invited to this meeting—this was in December of 1951. He laid it on. He started the meeting by saying, "I am sick to the

teeth hearing about administration around here, and I have called you together to tell you how it's going to be." He made it quite clear that the Clandestine Services were not going to have their own, and they would draw their support from the central offices, and that I was to become the new Assistant Deputy Director for Administration. Although Walter Wolf was the Deputy, Walter Wolf might as well have been in Timbuktu.

General Smith threw a chart up on the blackboard. "If you have a problem, you take it to White." He went around the table, and he asked each of those men there, "Do you understand what I said, and do you agree with it?" "Oh, yes." "Oh, yes." Until they came to [Assistant Director for Policy Coordination H. K. Kilbourne] "Par" Johnston, who was a colonel over there running the OPC [covert action] business at that time. Johnston said, "Oh, yes, General, I understand what you said, but there might be one point where you and I would disagree." Smith pounded the table, and he said, "Goddamn you, Johnston, you don't disagree with me, do you understand that?" Johnston said, "Yes, sir."

Then he went on, and the last one was Allen Dulles. And he said, "Allen, do you understand what I have said? Do you agree with it?" "Oh, yes, Beetle, yes Beetle." Then he said, "I do think it would be helpful if you would reproduce that chart." The chart had just three boxes. "I think it would be helpful if you would reproduce that so we could all have a copy." Beetle said, "I will not reproduce that Goddamn chart, and you can sit here in silence until you have committed it to memory!" They all sat there for about a minute, and he said,

"Have you got it?" In unison, they all said, "Oh, yes."

Before the meeting broke up, he had asked the question, "Is there anybody in this room who thinks they can write up what I have said as a directive?" Of course, nobody volunteered, so I volunteered, and I wrote it right away. Within 24 hours, I took it to Frank Wisner to get his concurrence, and he wouldn't concur. I said, "Frank, I've tried to write what he said, and if I failed, tell me where I failed." Frank said, "No, I don't argue with that, you have written it the way he said it, but I don't want to concur." Allen Dulles was now the Deputy to General Smith, so I gave it to Allen Dulles.

Another 24 hours went by, and I bumped into General Smith in the hallway, and he said, "Where's that directive?" I said, "General, I wrote it right away, but I gave it to Mr. Dulles." "You gave it to Allen Dulles, for God's sake?" He said, "He won't understand it. Get it away from him right now." So I busted into Allen Dulles's office, and I said, "General Smith wants that paper. He wants it right now." With that, and with a minor change or two, it was published, and that was the beginning of the central administrative concept.

I think that people thought this would only last as long as Beetle was there, since Allen Dulles had originally been opposed to this. The reason that it was never changed was that Allen Dulles and I became very close. It was through his desire to have a new building. Allen wasn't much of an administrator, and he didn't like to be bothered with it. He really was interested in having that building. I did everything for him on that building. I went to all the meetings. I made all the presentations. If I wanted to see him about something, I

would tell his secretary that I had something to talk to him about the building, and then I'd take in an armload of stuff, and he was such a gentleman, he would never throw you out. From the beginning with Beetle Smith, nobody ever seemed to rely on Walter Wolf, and Dulles always dealt with me.

*On one occasion during the Korean war, the Army wanted Col. Shef-field Edwards, Director of the Agency's Office of Security, to return to military duty.*

Normally I would call the Pentagon and ask that "Shef" be extended for a year. But in this instance when I called, they said no. I asked who I could speak with to have this changed, and they said General [Anthony] McAuliffe.<sup>1</sup> General McAuliffe was then a three-star general, and I wouldn't get very far talking to him, so I reported this to General Smith. General Smith said, "I'll call Tony," and he did. They passed a minute or two very pleasantly, and then Beetle said, "Now, Tony, we've got Shef Edwards over here, and you're going to send him off to Korea, you're not going to promote him, and we'd like to keep him another year." Apparently, General McAuliffe said no. Beetle Smith said, and I quote, "Goddamn you, McAuliffe, you haven't learned anything since you were a major, and you were pretty stupid then!"

*Shef Edwards remained at CIA until his retirement in 1963. Soon after he became Assistant Deputy Director for Administration, White was asked by General Smith to look into the Agency's personnel ceiling.*

I wrote a memorandum to General Smith. I put it on one page. I had some attachments, but the gist of it was on one page. I didn't hear anything from

him, so I asked for an appointment. He gave me an appointment on Saturday morning. I went in, and he said, "What's your problem?" I said, "General, have you had time to read that memorandum on personnel ceilings that I sent you?" He said, "I have a stack of papers on my desk, I guess it's somewhere in that stack." I said, "Yes, sir, and it's only one page." He said, "Nobody in this Goddamn place ever wrote a memorandum of only one page." I said, "I did." He and I found it, and then he signed it. From that day forward, I had the best relationship. I never had to write him any memorandums.

Allen Dulles supported me completely. He was a great fellow. He was all over the Agency. If he wanted to talk to somebody in the bowels of the Agency, he sent for them. He was a gentleman, and I think he attracted a lot of people that might otherwise not have been interested in working for the Agency.

Initially the Clandestine Services had a small administrative staff, and they had Ted Shannon. The Clandestine Services didn't like Ted Shannon when he was in the front office, but they got to like him when he became theirs. He had a small staff there, and something fell between the cracks one day. Allen Dulles had Frank Wisner and me into his office, and I said, "I don't really think this was my fault because Frank's staff should have taken care of it." And Frank said he really didn't think it was his fault. Dulles didn't normally get tough, but he said, "I'll tell you, starting right now anything that has to do with administration in this Agency is the responsibility of Red White, and the next time this happens there's not going to be any questions about who is responsible." Frank said, "Let me transfer my administrative staff to Red White, I don't want anything

more to do with it...." As we walked out of the office, Frank and I stood on the steps of the building, and Frank said, "Red, what does administration mean?" I said, "Frank, I guess in the simplest terms it just means management." He said, "Allen Dulles and I don't really know anything about it."

### **A Difficult Man**

I never had much trouble with anybody, except a little bit with [Deputy Director for Plans Richard] Bissell. Dick was a brilliant college professor, and, so far as I know, he had never had any leadership role in commanding or running large units. The Clandestine Service is a pretty complicated thing to run. He just ignored Dick Helms, who's probably the best professional who ever served there. He [Bissell] didn't trust anybody. He'd done a good job on the U-2, no question about that. He would come to the morning meeting and chew his fingernails during the meeting. Or somebody would say something he didn't like, and he'd break a pencil. A very emotional fellow. I never had many run-ins with him, only one time it was serious. He had \$20 million in the budget that I didn't know what it was for. I told him that I needed something [justifying it], and he promised to give it to me, but he never did.

I called him one day and said, "I'm meeting with Allen Dulles tomorrow at 2 p.m. about our budget, and I don't have any justification for that \$20 million." He went right through the roof. He said, "You are going to talk to Allen Dulles about my budget?" He said, "I'm busy tomorrow, and I can't be there." I said, "Dick, I waited three weeks, and I'm not going to wait any longer. You

can be there or not. I'm just telling you that I'm going to talk to him tomorrow afternoon." He was there. He never did give much of a justification, and Allen had the file, and Allen said—typical of Allen—"Oh, Red, go ahead and put it in there."

We put it in there, and Bissell wanted to go over to the Budget Bureau with Allen when we were having our final session with the Director [of the Bureau of the Budget]. And Dick got emotional over there and made a complete ass of himself, as far as I'm concerned. He was against the building [the original Headquarters building, which was then being built]. He didn't want to move out to that building. And he said, "Red spends all this money on this building, he's got a million dollars in there for furniture. Take that away from him." Everyone was saying, "What's the matter with this guy?" Had I been Allen, I would have shut him up right there, but Allen didn't.

### **Picking a Headquarters Site**

Allen Dulles and I had decided to build a building where it is now. The landed gentry out there didn't want us out there. They picked on [Lyman] Kirkpatrick, who was our Inspector General. One day at the DCI's morning meeting, Kirkpatrick made a speech about how they didn't want us out there. Of course, he lived out there, too. He told Allen that he thought we were going to get in a lot of trouble, and we ought not to do it. Allen looked at me and said, "Red, find another site." He and I talked a little bit, and we were considering tearing down the old Heurich Brewery, and it was right where the Kennedy Center is now. We were think-

ing of taking that over and building the building right there.

One Friday night Allen called me and said he'd had a call from President Eisenhower, who wanted to see him at 10 a.m. the next morning to talk about the building. Allen asked me to go with him. I said, "What do you want me to bring?" he said, "I don't know what he wants to talk about, so let's don't bring anything." Before I left home, I put a little map of Washington, DC, in my coat pocket, and we go over to the White House.

Eisenhower was getting ready to go play golf, and [Colonel] Andy Goodpaster [Eisenhower's military aide] was the only person there. We sat down, and the President said, "Allen, I want to talk to you about this new building. Where are you going to build it?" Allen said, "Mr. President, we're looking at a number of sites. We're thinking about tearing down that old brewery and building it right there." Eisenhower went through the roof. He said, "You are not going to build that building in the District of Columbia. This town is so cluttered up now you can't get from one end to the other, and you are going to get out of town." I thought, "My goodness, we're going to end up in Texas or someplace."

Allen kept appealing that he had to be near the White House, the Pentagon, and the State Department. Eisenhower would have none of it. Finally, I screwed up my courage and said, "Mr. Dulles, since the President feels so strongly about this, maybe we ought to reconsider that old Leichter estate." Allen took off on that, about what a nice place that was and what not. The President said, "I never heard of the old Leichter estate, where's that?" I pulled out my map and put it on the President's desk and said, "It's right

there, Mr. President." He said, "How far is that from the zero milestone?" I said, "It is 7.1 miles as the crow flies." He said, "That's okay."

## Doing Business With Congress

*After winning the President's approval, the Agency had to have the building approved by the Congress.*

The hearing was before Carl Vinson [D-GA], who was the Chairman of the House Armed Services Committee. I was supposed to make the presentation, and we tried to persuade the Chairman not to have the full committee in there. He insisted that he was going to have them. "Okay," he said, "I'll handle them, don't worry about it." So we go up, and he said to Allen Dulles—he called him Doctor—"Doctor, you are here to ask us for a new building, and I think you ought to have a new building. Where are you going to build it?" Dulles said, "We don't know for sure, Mr. Chairman." Vinson said, "You probably are going to ask us for about \$25 million." Allen said, "Mr. Chairman, we're going to ask you for \$50 million." Vinson replied, "My, my, that is going to be a nice building."

This kind of banter went on, and I'm waiting to make the presentation. A Congressman named Mr. [Richard] Lankford, [Democrat] from Maryland, asked the Chairman if he could ask a question, and the Chairman said, "Sure." So he asked Allen some question that had nothing to do with the building. It was just something that Lankford had wanted to ask for a long time. It made the old man [Vinson] mad, and he turned to his clerk, and

said, "This item is unanimously approved. Bring on the next item of business."

*White provided other examples of what it was like to do business with Congress in those days.*

Clarence Cannon [D-MO] was the Chairman of the [House Appropriations] Committee for a number of years. George Mahon [D-TX] and Jerry Ford [R-MI] were there. Allen Dulles called me on Sunday morning and said, "I just had a call from Clarence Cannon. He wants us to have a budget hearing at 2 p.m. this afternoon. Can we do that?" I said, "Mr. Dulles, if Mr. Cannon wants it, we can do it." That was his [Cannon's] idea, and he'd call the rest of the committee members, Ford and Mahon, and say, "Come off the golf course." He'd call and tell them, "Be there," and they'd be there. His idea was that nobody would even know we'd had any meeting. Kept it secret. He would lecture us, and he'd say, "I don't want you taking up my time with a lot of stuff I'm going to read in the newspaper tomorrow, and I don't want you holding out anything on me, either."

We'd tell him anything he wanted to know. He wouldn't give us a rough time, but he didn't give us *carte blanche*. At the end of the meeting, he'd say to Allen, "Mr. Dulles, do you think you have asked us for enough money?" And Allen would say, "Mr. Chairman, we have asked you for what we think we can spend wisely. If I run short, I know where to come." Year after year, we got just about what we asked for. Also, we kept our reserve up pretty well, so if something came up, you could handle it.

Of course, in my day we just had these small committees to deal with. If some Congressman called up and demanded something, which they did once in a while, we'd just go tell Senator Russell or the old man from Missouri [Cannon], we'd just go tell them, "Say, Congressman Jones called me, and he wants this, that, and the other. I don't want to get in trouble with Mr. Jones, but what do we do about this?" "I'll take care of it." You would never hear any more about it. If you had the confidence of Senator Russell and Clarence Cannon, you really didn't have to worry too much, they'd take care of you.

## Signs of Trouble

*Placing the Headquarters building in Langley meant that the George Washington Memorial Parkway had to be extended up the Potomac. Road signs along the Parkway identifying the location of the CIA caused a problem with the Kennedy administration.*

I don't think you've ever heard the story about the signs out there [at the Headquarters building]. You see, the National Park Service built that road out there [the George Washington Memorial Parkway]. The authorization for the road had been on the books for 20 years, but they didn't have any money. So we got the money, it was \$8.5 million, I think, to build the parkway out there. Before the building was ever finished, they put up these signs, "Central Intelligence Agency." Bobby Kennedy didn't like those signs, and so the President spoke to Allen that he didn't like the signs. Allen didn't pay much attention to it. One day, during the DCI's morning meeting, the President called and he

said, "Allen, if you don't get those signs down, I'm going to come out there and take them down myself." Allen turned to me and said, "Red, get the signs down." I called up the Director of the National Parks, and I said, "The President says get those signs down." And I said, "Take them down quick, but take them down quietly; we don't need any publicity." They were down for a month or so before anybody noticed, and then all the newspapers came out with some headline; *The Washington Post*, I think, said, "Oh, CIA, Can You See?"

### Working for DCI John McCone

*When the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) was founded in January 1961, White, who was now Deputy Director for Administration, had the responsibility for finding a home for the new organization.*

John McCone put pressure on me about that building. We picked up that old warehouse down in the Navy Yard and decided to renovate that. And John McCone called me in one day and said, "When are you going to finish that building?" I said, "We haven't let any contracts yet." He said, "I want you to come back and tell me in 24 hours when you are going to finish the building." After talking to everybody, I went back and I said, "If we take some shortcuts we can finish it in June" [1963]. He said, "That's not good enough. You go back and sharpen your pencil again." I met with him a couple of other times, and one day he said to me, "I want that building finished by 31 December" [1962]. I said, "We'll do the best we can." Later, he said, "I not only want that building finished by 31 December, I

want NPIC in there and operating on 1 January" [1963].

I pulled out all the stops. People would call me and say, "We need some coaxial cable, but it's down in Houston, and it will take two or three weeks to get it up here." I said, "No. It's going to take one day. Put it on an airplane and fly it up here. I don't care what it costs." That's the way we built the building and fixed it and everything. A week or so before the end of the year, I called [NPIC Director] Art Lundahl and said, "Art, you're going to move New Year's Eve." He said, "You're kidding?" I said, "I'm not." New Year's Day I informed the Director that the building was finished, NPIC was in there and operating. I thought he'd tell me that was a pretty good job, but he never did. As a matter of fact, he disliked the building. He was criticizing not only that building but also our Headquarters building. He didn't like his office. It was done the way Allen Dulles wanted, but he didn't like it. He was always griping about it, but he'd bring people out to show them all the time.

Just before he [McCone] took office, he came out to the building, and Allen and I took him out to see the new Headquarters building, then under construction. He looked at it for a few minutes, and then Allen said, "I better go back to the office," and then, "Red, you take John wherever he wants to go."

He [McCone] wanted to go home, and as we're riding along he said, "I assume you are getting a new car for me." I had ordered one for Allen, and, when I had found out Allen wasn't going to be there, I thought, "No use wasting this, I'll just give it to the new Director." So I held it up out in Detroit, and I said, "Yes

sir, I have a new car on order for you." And he said, "You're not buying one, are you?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You don't do that. General Motors will furnish me a car. And you get a new one every year and it only costs \$1,200." I said, "Mr. McCone, I know about that, but that's for the Cabinet, and I don't think they'd do it for you." He said, "They did it for me when I was the Chairman of AEC." I said, "Yes, you were an ex officio member of the Cabinet." "Oh," he said, "They'll do it for me. I'll call General Motors." So I said, "Okay."

I'm holding up this car out there, and he did call General Motors, and then he called me and said, "You call Mr. So-and-so, who is the Vice President for Government Relations." I did. I said, "I understand you are going to furnish Mr. McCone a Cadillac, just like you did when he was Chairman of the AEC." He said, "No way." I argued with him a little bit and didn't get anywhere. I said, "Would you be good enough to write me a memorandum telling me this?" He said, "I'd be very glad to." Which he did.

Now I've got to try and get the car [that he bought for Allen Dulles]. I've got to send somebody out to Detroit to get the car. When we were at the White House for the swearing in ceremony for McCone, the car wasn't here. I'm way back in the corner where I belong. McCone came into that meeting, he didn't speak to anybody, he came straight for me over in the corner, and he said, "Is my new car waiting outside?" I said, "No it isn't, Mr. McCone, I bought it, but I couldn't get it here in time for the ceremony." He said, "I wanted to leave this ceremony in that car." I said, "I'm sorry, it isn't here."

**“**  
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**”**

Later, one of the security guards came to me and said, "Colonel, I don't know if I should tell you this, but Mr. Dulles came by here, and he got out of the car, and he said to Mrs. Dulles, 'Clover, I'll be home later in a taxi.'" I called Allen, and I said, "We're going to take care of you. I've got to take that limousine away from you, but I'll take care of you. Don't worry about it." The next morning the old Cadillac picks up John McCone at his house to go to the White House, and it broke down. My phone was jumping off the hook.

I could talk about McCone for hours. I respected him, but he was a hard man to work for. His secretary's name was Terry something-or-other. McCone had been on a trip, and he and his wife saw the Pope, and they had a picture taken with the Pope. He didn't like the picture, but he had another picture that he did like, so he wanted to get the heads transferred from the picture that he did like to the one with the Pope. They didn't talk to me about it, but Terry went over to the printing people, and they said, "Sure, we can do this for you." So he said, "Mr. McCone wants to pay for this." They said OK. When Terry came to me, he had a bill for about \$1,500. He said, "If I sign my name to that check, I'll get fired." I said, "Look, Terry, if you had come to me in the first place you wouldn't be in this situation. Give it to me." I finally said, "We can knock off the overtime," and I got it down to about \$700. He signed the check. Any rate, I think McCone was a good Director. He was not a man that people were going to love, but he was efficient. He demanded a lot, and he got a lot out of people.

He'd get on a plane to go to the West Coast, and I think all the way out there he thought up things he wanted us to do

before he got back. He'd send these messages back, and he kept half of us working. You know, I'll give the guy some credit. He was a bright fellow, he was a pretty good manager. He just didn't have any leadership. He had no charisma. But he never fired a single soul. He made me and others feel like they might get fired any day, but he never really fired anybody.

My last contact with him was after he left. When he'd come back to Washington, he'd call me, and he wanted a car and a chauffeur. I had an old Cadillac limousine down there that I used for that. It used to haul Vice President Humphrey around. So I'd give him a car and a chauffeur, and he liked that.

One day, some Greek [official] died, and [Deputy Director for Operations] Tom Karamessines called me and told me that this Greek [official] had died and McCone, I think, asked Tom to send flowers in his name and so forth. In the course of the conversation, he told Tom, "I'm going to be in Washington next weekend, and I'd like a car and chauffeur, pick me up at a certain time," and so forth. Tom never had this problem before. So he calls up Security. Security never had this problem before. So Security details one of their officers to do all this. So this car is not a limousine, it's a Buick, or something. McCone asked [the driver], "Whose car is this?" He [the driver] says "It's my car. I'm detailed to take care of you." I didn't know anything about this.

Dick Helms called me, and he said, "What have you done to John McCone?" I said, "I haven't done anything to John." McCone had called him and had complained bitterly about the shabby treatment he had had. So I said, "Dick, this is the first I've heard of it, but I'll call him right now." I called him up out in the West Coast and apologized, and I said, "Now, Mr. McCone, you've been around here long enough to know that, as far as the Clandestine Service is concerned, a straight line is not the shortest distance between two points. Have you ever been disappointed when you called my office?" He said, "No." I said, "Why don't you just call my office in the future? We won't have any problems." Oh gosh, what a time.

Mr. McCone was very close with Bobby Kennedy, and I guess the President, too. He was in solid with the Kennedys, and he wasn't in solid with Lyndon Johnson. I think [DCI Admiral William] "Red" Raborn told me, he said, "Lyndon Johnson told me that he was sick and tired of John McCone tugging at his coat tails," and he [Johnson] said to Raborn, "If I want to talk to you, I'll call you." Poor old Raborn took that so seriously, he came out there every morning at 6:30 and had breakfast thinking the President would call him some day. I don't think he ever did. That's also the reason McCone quit. It's kind of ironic in that Lyndon Johnson, on the spur of the moment, decided to give John a cocktail party. I got invited at 3 p.m. "Come and have cocktails at the White House." I went over there with my wife and not many other people, maybe not more than 20, I'd say. Lyndon Johnson gave him a medal and made a nice speech and everything. I stood there knowing that neither of them was serious about what they were saying, but they made it look good.

## **“ The Executive Director’s job is whatever the Director wants to make it. ”**

### **Executive Director Under Raborn and Helms**

When McCone left and Raborn came aboard, and Dick Helms became Raborn’s deputy, [Executive Director Lyman] Kirkpatrick saw that he wasn’t going to go any further, so he decided to leave. Dick Helms called me in and said he wanted me to become the Executive Director. I said, “I will, but it’s not something that I’m really anxious to do. I’m happy where I am.” Dick said, “You’ve been there 12 years. You’re in a rut. I want you to come up here.” So I said, “Fine.” I was up there almost seven years and had a wonderful relationship with him.

The Executive Director’s job is whatever the Director wants to make it. It is an administrative job, or was, when I was there, in that I didn’t get into intelligence. I mean I read National Estimates and that sort of thing, but I didn’t have anything to do with writing any papers or making any judgments about intelligence. I didn’t interfere with clandestine operations, except to the extent that I had to approve their budgets. I tried to keep myself posted in a general sort of way, but I never really questioned their judgment as to whether an operation was good or not.

[Raborn] wasn’t qualified. He had made a name for himself developing the Polaris, and he had gotten to know Lyndon Johnson. He had a good job out on the West Coast, and Lyndon Johnson put the finger on him to come in and run the CIA, and he was not qualified to run the CIA. He just didn’t have that kind of qualifications. He had a lot of friends up in Congress. But when he’d go up there and testify, he’d have his testimony and he’d read that. When the Congressmen would start asking him

questions behind that, he was just completely out in left field. He was a good friend of mine, and I think I was a good friend of his. I tried to help him in every way I could. I played golf with him quite frequently. If you talked about foreign countries, he wouldn’t know if you were talking about a country in Africa or South America.

Actually, I kept Raborn posted generally, but I saw Helms every day. When he became Director, we had a 4 p.m. appointment every day, and he was faithful about keeping it. I dealt in all the non-intelligence. All the other papers, projects, Clandestine Service’s projects, everybody’s projects, all came to me and I looked at them, read them, and made up my mind as to whether I thought they ought to be approved. Each day at 4 p.m. I’d take a stack of stuff in, and I’d tell Dick what this is all about, and this is what I think we ought to do. He said, “Okay.” Or maybe I’d say, “I need your guidance as to what we do about this.” He’d tell me. Rarely did I have to have him sign it. Sometimes he had papers he’d have to sign, and he’d sign them.

Dick was a private guy. I think I knew him pretty well as a result of all these meetings, but I remember one day he was out somewhere, and I was out somewhere, and something happened. It needed somebody’s attention. When I saw him, I said, “Dick, maybe you and I ought to exchange calendars. If I knew what was on your calendar, and you knew what was on mine, we wouldn’t

have this happen again.” He said, “No, I’ll keep my calendar. You keep yours. If there’s something I’m doing I think you ought to know about, I’ll tell you.”

I had a good relationship with him. One day, he was going out of town. Ethel Kennedy was giving a party for Ted Kennedy at their place near the new building. He said, “I’m going to be out of town. You may get a call that they want to use our parking lot for their guests for this party.” I said, “If I get a call, what do you want me to do about it?” He said, “You just do whatever you think is right.”

Sure enough, I’m out playing golf Saturday in Virginia. Howard Osborn, from Security, comes all the way out there to tell me I’m supposed to call Senator Kennedy. I said, “I’ll call him when I finish the first nine holes.” I did, and I got a maid or somebody at the house, and I told her who I was, and that I was returning Senator Kennedy’s call. She said, “I can’t interrupt him, he’s playing tennis.” I said, “You tell him I’m playing golf. And I’ll be home around 5:30 p.m., and, if he wants to talk with me, he can call me.”

He never called, but Monday morning somebody from his office called. Put the proposition to me what they wanted: Ethel was having this party, and they wanted to use our parking lot. I said, “No. We can’t do this. Our people won’t be fully out of there, and we just can’t do this. This is a precedent, and we can’t do it.” So they hung up, and 15 minutes later somebody else called. He said, “Kennedy’s chief of staff,” or something, and he put on the pressure, and I said, “No. We just can’t do it.” He said, “The Senator will want to know who made this decision.” I said, “My name is Red White, and I’m the

Executive Director here, and I'm making the decision." Never heard any more about it.

## A Delicate Matter

[When I was] Executive Director, Bill Harvey got to be a problem [in Rome].<sup>2</sup> Bill had quite a reputation. When he was overseas, he'd drink those bathtub martinis, so Des FitzGerald, who was the DDP, went over and, I think, relieved Bill as chief. One day, I was summoned to a meeting in Dick Helms's office. I go in, and there's FitzGerald, Jim Angleton, and, I think, Tom Karamessines, and I don't know who else, and the subject was: what are we going to do with Bill Harvey? I thought, "What am I doing here?" Jim Angleton spoke up, and he said, "Dick, there's only one man in the Agency that can handle Bill Harvey today." And Helms said, "Who's that?" He said, "Red." I said, "Wait a cotton-picking minute... I've always known Bill Harvey, knew he was a good operator and all that, but don't talk to me about taking over this thing now." Helms said, "You would if I asked you, wouldn't you?" I said, "I guess I wouldn't have much choice if you ask me." He said, "I'm asking you."

So, I took charge of Bill Harvey, and I talked to him immediately. I said, "Bill you've got a wonderful reputation, and you've got a drinking problem. You and I have never had any supervisory relationship, but starting right now we have a clean slate."

It wouldn't be long before Bill would show up at some meeting just crocked. I sent for him. He'd come in the door apologizing, every time. After about the third or fourth time, he said "If I ever

embarrass you or this Agency again, I'll retire." It wasn't a month until he did, and he came in and said, "I made a promise to you, and I'm here to live up to it." I said, "Bill, I hate to see your career end this way, but I guess that's the way it has to be." I said, "You've got some sick leave coming, why don't you take that?" So he did, and he hung around town for about six months before he actually retired, but that was the kind of thing once in a while as Executive Director you got into.

## Bowing Out

I retired in 1972. In the fall of 1971, I told Dick, "You know I'm going to be 60 next June so I'm planning on retiring." He said, "No, you're not going to run out on me." I said, "Dick, look, you have this policy, it's not my policy, but I'm the guy who enforces it, and I just don't think I would be comfortable staying here after I'm 60." After a day or two he said, "OK, I understand." And he said, "Now, you find somebody to take your place, and I don't want somebody who just wants to take your place so he can get mine." After talking with the other deputies and other people, we came up with [future DCI William] Colby. The Vietnam thing was over, and he was kind of at loose ends, so Dick agreed that it would be Colby.

I just had to clean out my desk. Helms asked me, however, to do some sampling and to tell him what I thought about the idea of a retiree organization. And I did. I told him, I said, "I think you are going to have one whether you want one or not, because there's an awful lot of retired people that want this." He said, "Fine." Then I became the first President of the CIRA, they call it, and then

he gave a party for me with about 25 or 30 people, a dinner party. Then Colby asked me if Sue and I would be willing to stand in line for an hour or so for people who might want to wish us well, and I said yes, and I meant it. It turned out that they had to have two days. People stood in line about two hours for two separate days, and I was overcome that that many people really wanted to wish me well. And then Dick, in the retirement ceremony in the auditorium, made a very nice speech. In closing his speech, he said, "I was reading some things the other day that I think I'd like to share with you." And he read a flattering statement about somebody, and after he read it he said, "These words were written by Thomas Jefferson about George Washington, and they apply very well to Red White." So I couldn't make much of a speech after that.

## NOTES

1. In World War II, McAuliffe was commander of US forces in Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He became famous for saying "Nuts!" to the German commander's demand for US surrender.
2. Bill Harvey was a legend in the Clandestine Service by this time. He had been in Berlin when the Berlin Tunnel was built to tap into Soviet communication lines in East Berlin, and he later headed Operation Mongoose, the attempt to undermine Fidel Castro's regime. One of Harvey's affectations was to regularly carry two pistols.